

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 4656

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SF, PINT, SHUM
SUBJECT: BOPHUTHATSWANA ELECTIONS

REF: (A) PRETORIA 3474, (B) PRETORIA 2101,

1. SUMMARY: BOPHUTHATSWANA HELD ITS LAST ELECTION BEFORE INDEPENDENCE ON AUGUST 24. TURN-OUT WAS POOR BUT MANGOPE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY WON AN OVERWHELMING VICTORY APPARENTLY ACCUMULATING 43 OF 48 ELECTED SEATS. OPPOSITION LEADERS SAY THE POOR TURN-OUT WAS PROOF OF THE STRONG FEELING AGAINST INDEPENDENCE. END SUMMARY.
2. BOPHUTHATSWANA HAS HELD ITS LAST GENERAL ELECTION PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE ON DECEMBER 6. IN URBEN AREAS OUTSIDE THE HOME-
LAND, VOTING BY TSWANAS TOOK PLACE ON AUGUST 22 THROUGH 24. IN THE HOMELAND ITSELF, VOTING WAS ON AUGUST 24. TURN-OUT FOR THE ELECTION WAS POOR, EVEN COMPARED TO THE LAST POLL IN 1972. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, 375,000 VOTERS REGISTERED OUT OF 1.2 MILLION WHO WERE ELIGIBLE. IN 1972, 424,000 VOTERS REGISTERED. THE FINAL RESULTS
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HAVE YET TO BE ANNOUNCED--ELECTORAL OFFICIALS ESTIMATED IT WOULD TAKE THREE WEEKS TO COUNT VOTES--BUT EVEN MANGOPE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS CLAIMED ONLY ABOUT 190,000 VOTERS TURNED OUT. OPPOSITION MEMBERS HAVE TOLD THE EMBASSY THE TURN-OUT WAS FAR BELOW THAT NUMBER. IN URBAN AREA, THE PERCENTAGE OF VOTER TURN-OUT WAS LESS THAN IN THE HOMELAND. TYPICAL RESULTS, AS REPORTED IN THE

LOCAL PRESS, WERE 600 OUT OF 3,500 REGISTERED VOTERS CASTING BALLOTS IN KRUGERSDORP; 800 OUT OF 4,500 REGISTERED VOTERS IN JOHANNESBURG/SOWETO AREA; AND 500 OUT OF 1,100 REGISTERED IN MAMELODI AND ATTERIDGEVILLE.

3. IN THE BOPHUTHATSWANA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THERE ARE 48 ELECTED AND 48 NOMINATED SEATS--OF THE LATTER, 47 ARE MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY. MANGOPE THEREFORE NEEDED TO WIN ONLY TWO OF THE ELECTED SEATS TO HAVE A MAJORITY. ALTHOUGH ELECTION RESULTS HAVE NOT YET BEEN MADE OFFICIAL, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY TOOK AT LEAST 43 OF THE 48 ELECTED SEATS. MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION PARTY, BOPHUTHATSWANA NATIONAL SEOPOSENGWE PARTY (BNSP), WHO, ALONG WITH FOUR INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES WERE THE ONLY OPPOSITION, SAY THAT MANGOPE'S VIRTUAL SWEEP OF ELECTED SEATS WAS EXPECTED. FIVE MEMBERS OF BNSP WERE APPARENTLY ELECTED, BUT VOCAL OPPOSITION LEADER CHIEF HERMAN MASELOANE LOST IN HIS CONSTITUENCY. SAG AND BOPHUTHATSWANA OFFICIALS ARE ALREADY REFERRING TO THE "LANDSLIDE VICTORY" AS PROOF OF THE TSWANAS' ACCEPTANCE OF INDEPENDENCE ON DECEMBER 6.

4. BOPHUTHATSWANA OPPOSITION MEMBERS IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF ASSERT THAT THE LOW TURN-OUT REFLECTS WIDESPREAD REJECTION OF INDEPENDENCE. IN ORDER TO REGISTER TO VOTE, TSWANAS MUST HAVE THEIR PASS BOOKS
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STAMPED TO INDICATE THEY ARE BOPHUTHATSWANA CITIZENS. EVIDENTLY, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF TSWANAS, PARTICULARLY IN URBAN AREAS, REFUSE TO DO THIS. EVEN OF THOSE VOTERS WHO REGISTERED, BNSP MEMBERS CLAIM, MOST WOULD NOT HAVE VOTED EXCEPT FOR COERCION AND THREATS BY THE HOMELAND GOVERNMENT. THEY CHARGE THAT RURAL PEOPLE, USUALLY OLDER ONES, WERE APPROACHED BY LOCAL ELDERS AND CHIEFS AND PRESSURED INTO VOTING. CORRUPTION, THEY SAY, IS ANOTHER FACTOR. ALL VOTES ARE COUNTED IN MAFEKING, INCLUDING THOSE CAST IN URBAN TOWNSHIPS. ELECTORAL OFFICIALS ARE ALL FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND NO OPPOSITION MEMBERS ARE ALLOWED TO ASSIST.

5. COMMENT: OPPOSITION LEADERS IN BOPHUTHATSWANA ARE PRONE TO EXAGGERATE THEIR CASE, BUT THE RESULTS CLEARLY SUGGEST THAT THERE IS LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FOR INDEPENDENCE AMONGST TSWANA SPEAKERS IN RURAL AS WELL AS URBAN AREAS. MANGOPE STILL LEAVES SOME DOUBT PUBLICLY THAT HE WILL OPT FOR INDEPENDENCE. OPPOSITION LEADERS ARE CONVINCED THAT HE WILL AND OUR OWN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH MANGOPE SUPPORT THIS. HE HAS TOLD US THAT PROBLEMS OF CITIZENSHIP AND LAND

CONSOLIDATION CAN BE ADDRESSED AFTER INDEPENDENCE.
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